

SPEECH

OF THE

COUNT MONTALEMBERT,

ON THE SUBJECT

OF

NATIONAL EDUCATION IN FRANCE;

DELIVERED IN THE

CHAMBER OF PEERS,

IN THE SITTING OF APRIL 16<sup>TH</sup>, 1844.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

BY PROFESSOR WALTER.

PHILADELPHIA:

WM. J. CUNNINGHAM, CATHOLIC BOOKSELLER,

No. 104 SOUTH THIRD STREET.

1844.

## P R E F A C E.

---

THE celebrated Speech, of which a translation is here presented to the public, is characterised by the London Tablet as "an event in modern Catholic History." The subject it is true, more immediately regards France; but the principles it involves affect Catholicity throughout the world. The Tablet farther observes, that "it is impossible to exaggerate the value, as it would be difficult to overrate the merit, of this most wise, most eloquent, and most courageous harangue. It is a blow struck for Catholicism, which will be not merely *heard* but *felt* in the remotest corners of Christendom. The Count Montalembert's speech is another added to the many instances which might be produced, of the infinite value to a good cause of even one man of common sense and intrepidity. But this noble peer's discourse has in it something more than common sense and intrepidity. It is a most masterly effort of eloquence; an effusion of genius; a discourse which we are sure no Catholic can read without feelings of emotion and pride. And yet, it is better than all this. It is something higher than genius; and nine-tenths of its fortunate result is to be attributed to the plain, hearty, downright, earnest sincerity which stamp every line and letter of it. That the speaker believed what he said; that he had the courage to stand singly against a hostile assembly to speak the truth, and to answer no private purpose whatever; that he had the firmness to carry his own purpose through without violence on the one side, or blenching on the other;—this has been the secret of his success, and still more than his success, of his usefulness.

"The Count has thrown a bomb-shell into the camp of the Deists and Pantheists. He has torn off the flimsy covering of false pretences with which dishonest power muffled up this subject. He has reduced it to its naked dimensions; and so stripped, he has fixed it on the public attention in a manner that has never been before witnessed in France."

Some idea may be formed of the importance attached in France to this fearless exposition of Catholic principles by a young and distinguished peer of the realm, from the fact that two charitable societies in Paris were publishing *forty thousand* copies of this Speech, at five centimes each, to spread it by gratuitous distribution.



S P E E C H  
OF THE  
COUNT DE MONTALEMBERT,

IN THE CHAMBER OF PEERS, IN THE SITTING OF APRIL 16, 1844.

IN the question under debate, I shall restrict myself to its religious bearing. I shall look at three things :—in the first place, the attitude taken by the clergy, by the episcopacy, and by a considerable portion of the catholics of France; in the second place, the conduct of the government in their regard; and in the third place, the counsels that have been given it.

I am about to defend the conduct of the clergy; I am about to blame, in certain respects, the conduct of the government, and to attempt to enlighten it upon others; in short, I am about to blame, to combat, and to turn aside, as far as I am able, the perverse and perfidious counsels that have been given it.

I shall content myself with a rapid review of the circumstances which have led to the demonstrations in question; and the circumstances which have induced the Bishops and the Catholics to speak out, are three in number. In the first place, the speech of the minister of Public Instruction, towards the close of the session of 1842, from this tribune, in which he declared, that to attack, under a religious and moral point of view, the system of instruction pursued in the Universities was a calumny, and that he expected the proofs for such an accusation; in the second place, a series of lectures, which I do not at this moment wish to qualify as originating in the College de France; and lastly, the presentation of the project of the law which you will discuss next week. Successively, and in consequence of these three facts, have Episcopacy, and Catholicism in France assumed their present attitude.

Sirs, in consequence of the attitude so assumed, what has taken place? On every side has a violent objection been manifested, vehement calumnies have been uttered, and the clergy been furiously assailed; all has been evoked against them, all possible laws existing or non-existing, the recollections of the ancient regime, and the reminiscences of the empire; and they have ended by demanding new laws, and by reminding you that you are the legislators who are to make them.

Sirs, in a country like ours, in which complaints and oppression are, in some sort, the daily bread of publicity and of the press; where, as I observed on a former occasion, public life is nothing else than a kind of perpetual murmur; no sooner does the least of its citizens utter a complaint against anything that annoys or oppresses him, than he meets with numberless sympathies, lively solitudes are attached to his person, and manifold encouragements await him. But what is very extraordinary, no sooner is a bishop, a priest, or a catholic heard to raise his voice and protest in the name of his opinion, than the fury of journalists, of lawyers, procurators-general, and counsellors of state, is let loose against him; what to other citizens is a natural and habitual right, is represented in his regard, either as a crime, or at best as a public nuisance; as though to be mute and self-like were a necessary condition in France, of the episcopacy and the priesthood; as though the frank and open profession of catholicity presupposed servile obedience to whatever the government chose to will or to think; as though the great catholic body of eighty bishops, of fifty thousand priests, and of many millions of the faithful, who for more than fifteen centuries have existed in this country, were to be estranged and shut out from that liberty of complaint, which is the common portion, the natural birth-right of every Frenchman!



It is time to come to an understanding on these matters. When we said nothing, it was observed of us,—O, they are conspiring in secret; they are hatching some dark plot or other. Under the Restoration, the song was,—sons of darkness, come forth from your lurking-places. And when we stood forth, and declared what we were and what we wished, the cry was,—Was ever audacity, was ever insolence like to this! When, under absolute monarchies, Catholics are silent, it is said, they are the accomplices of despotism. When, in free countries, Catholics seek to adopt the institutions, and to keep pace with the people and the age in which they live, who so railed at as they! Only look, they say, at those Catholics; they write books, they compose pamphlets, they keep up a correspondence together; one says that he is a Dominican, another that he is a Jesuit; nay, what is more, bishops have the audacity to send letters by the post; they hold what the Minister of public worship facetiously terms a *conclie*. All this passes in a country where exist the liberties of the Gallican Church; and it is suffered to go unpunished!

Persons the least bad are heard to say,—It is very unfortunate that they are so fanatically inclined, and will cherish such sentiments; if they would only keep them to themselves, and not give them a tongue and a place in our journals!

And yet, sirs, as the Prince of Moskowa said but yesterday, why all this aversion to publicity—publicity, the very soul of a representative government? Were it necessary to comprise within a single word all the advantages and all the guarantees of this government, I should not hesitate to say that it is contained in the single word—publicity. Every statesman not comprehending this truth appears to me, I dare to say it, a laggard of despotism, the survivor of a gone-by age. Hence all grave statesmen understand and apply it; all good citizens, all citizens jealous of those rights, understand and apply it. Why, then, should bishops, priests, and catholics, be shut out from this knowledge and this practice of the common right of constitutional France?

It is only a few days since, that a magistrate, high in place, publicly congratulated himself, before another tribunal, that we live under a *non-confessing* government. It is with governments as with tastes: but, at all events, it will be allowed that the government under which we live is a reader of journals; and it cannot be complained if the confessional (which they say no longer exists) be replaced by journals which exist perfectly well.

It seems to me, sirs, that there is a deplorable confusion of ideas abroad as to the true nature of the priesthood and the episcopacy.

It has been said that bishops are out of the rights of all the rest of the world; that for functionaries there are rights of position; that coalition among functionaries is forbidden. It has been asked, What is the duty of bishops and of priests? and the answer returned has been, that it is to preach up submission to the powers that be, obedience to the laws, and respect to the magistrate.

Well, sirs, I am prepared to say that this idea is altogether erroneous. (*Murmurs.*) No, the bishop is not a functionary; the priest is not a functionary; nothing can be more false than the opinion of those who see nothing in a bishop but a kind of prefect in cassock, a commissary of high moral police. An opinion prevails that the episcopal functions are limited to this,—to correspond with the offices of public worship, to be good administrators, to celebrate certain feasts with certain degrees of pomp, to baptise or inter princes, or to harangue them on their visits from city to city. Now all this is nothing, absolutely next to nothing, in the mission of a bishop.



Bishops, in the eyes of Catholics—and, after all, they are made for Catholics, and not for those who, according to a celebrated phrase, “don’t use them,”—bishops are commissioned by God for the government of the Church; they have received a mission from on high to direct our consciences, or to trouble them, as need may be; they are the ambassadors of God to man; the king designates, he chooses them, but it is not from him they hold their power; (*murmurs*;) the law recognises their authority, but it is not the law that has created it: they hold their authority from God, or they hold it from no one. This is their belief, as it is ours. Every bishop who should not hold this belief, who should not look upon himself as invested with a power independent of all human authority, would be an impostor; he ought no longer to hold the functions he fulfils; and every bishop holding this belief, and not acting as the French bishops have recently acted for the salvation of souls, would be a prevaricator.

This is the formal doctrine of the Church, this her constant practice from age to age; she herself explains the conduct which has been held in this regard, and which has shocked so many opinions.

The honourable magistrate, high in place, has said,—and this time I agree with him,—If we study our political liberties without studying our religious liberties, our education will be incomplete. To judge by what is taking place, the keeper of the seals, and several other magistrates, are precisely in this condition. They have need of completing their education, and I beg leave to recount to you, in their behalf, a short story which we learned in our infancy, before being drilled at the University, and which we shall try not to forget.

There was a bishop named Basil; he was neither a Jesuit nor an Ultra-montanist, for he lived in the fourth century. This bishop had had some difficulties with the state of his day, in other words, with the Emperor Valens, respecting a question which assuredly did not concern men more than the education of future generations, which is the question now at issue. The emperor threatened him through one of his ministers, of the name of Modestus, whom we may call the Minister of Worship of that day. (*A laugh.*) This minister seeing Basil answer publicly and with firmness, exclaimed, I was never spoken to with arrogance like this. Basil’s reply was, The reason is that you had never yet to do with a bishop. And he added, We, of all people in the world, are the most humble, not only towards the emperor, but towards all men. But when God’s honour is at stake, we think of nothing else, looking simply to Him.

That Modestus should have been astonished at this language held by a bishop, four hundred years after Jesus Christ, was natural enough; but by no means so natural is the surprise expressed in person by all the prefects of the pretorium, by all the ministers, procurators-general, and other politicians of this stamp, who, for fifteen hundred years, have been in presence of episcopal resistance. We must incessantly repeat to them the same thing, “You have never had to do with a bishop;”—in other words, you have had to do with intriguants, with the ambitious, sometimes with honest men, but never with men whose conviction is that they hold their mission from on high, and that theirs is a responsibility before God. And now, when you encounter such men, you know them by their language. Here you have a sample of what was said under the despotism of the Roman emperors, and what was under-



stood then ; and across the track of ages the same lesson is constantly renewed.

We have been told how desirable for the clergy of our day would be the charity and gentleness of a Fenelon. Well, let us see what was said by the gentle and charitable Fenelon, three centuries after St. Basil, when he was called upon to consecrate a prince of the church, under the absolute monarchy of Louis the Fourteenth :—

“ Let not princes boast of protecting the church ; let them not so far flatter themselves as to imagine that that church would fall unless they sustained it. Were they to desist from supporting it, the Most High himself would bear it up in His hands. As for themselves, in punishment for not duly obeying and respecting it, they will perish as the holy oracles have announced. The word of God which we preach, is bound by no human power. The world, in submitting to the church, has acquired no right of putting it under subjection ; in becoming the children of the church, they have not become its masters ; they ought to serve, not domineer over it, to kiss the dust on its feet, not impose a yoke upon its neck.”

Such are the words of the gentle Fenelon, of the charitable Fenelon, under the full despotism of Louis the Fourteenth, and in consecrating a sovereign prince. No bishop, in our days of liberty, has ever said as much ; but they all feel, and as sensibly as their predecessors did, the extent of their duty, and of the mission upon which they are sent. It is for this that Cardinal Bonald, Archbishop of Lyons, thus expresses himself in his last Pastoral Letter to his diocesans.

I ask freedom of the house for these quotations, but it is my earnest desire that the government and this house should form their judgment upon authoritative testimony, as such authorities must have so much more weight than any words of mine.

You have heard the language of a bishop of the fourth century, and that of a bishop of the seventeenth ; now hearken to the words of a bishop of our own day :—

“ What we have said in favour of the right of a father over the education of his son, will, in your eyes, be neither an insult against the State, nor an usurpation of privileges, which we in no wise ambition, nor a desire of dominion, which is far from our thoughts. What ! beloved brethren, to ask permission for you to exercise freely the right which you hold from God, in order that you may live anew in a pious and submissive generation ; is that on our part a seditious demand ? To second your endeavours that peace and virtue may reign in your homes ; is that a culpable abuse of our authority ? As though we were invested with the episcopal dignity only to appear with splendor in the sanctuary, like those mercenary pastors whom a prophet compares to mute idols ! As though the rays of the sun of Justice and of Truth, which every morning ascend above our altars, were to strike upon the heart of a bishop without calling thence a sound that should go to your hearts, to touch and instruct them ! As though we were always free to be silent or to speak out, merely as it seemed good to us ! We know what has happened to those who have gone before us in the apostolic career ; and if, in order to tread in their footsteps, we have to meet with sorrow and with poverty upon our path, the same grace which enabled them to bear up under suffering and privation, will not be denied to us.”

It is thus that the most exalted of the prelates of the Church of France has publicly expressed himself in 1844.



To this our adversaries will reply : But the church, then, is still the church of the middle age ; it is still the church of Gregory the Seventh, of Boniface the Eighth ? Good heavens, sirs, to be sure it is, literally and truly the same ; the church of Gregory the Sixteenth is the same with that of St. Gregory the Seventh ; as that of St. Gregory the Seventh is the same with that of Gregory the Great, of St. Basil, and of St. Hilary. Assuredly it might be far more convenient were it otherwise. I can well conceive that for our statesmen it would be more convenient that the church should vary in its dogmas, its rights, its pretensions, and its practices, as in its codes and tribunals. In all this there would be but one trifling inconvenience—the Catholic Church would dwindle into one of those religious sects, which, from age to age, undergo a transformation, and take the hue of the medium in which they live and move. It is not the church, then ; it is society that has undergone a change ; and hence the ridicule and injustice of those analogies which are drawn between the past and the present, of those accusations against the church of her disposition to interfere in the temporal concerns of our day, as she did in those of gone by ages.

And now, permit me to take a review with you of the bishops, who are so heavily accused ; of the clergy, who follow their impulse, and are so grievously reproached. In this episcopacy which has spoken with such unanimity, there are more than sixty bishops named by the present government, in which very number are those who, in the present struggle, have taken the most public and decided part, such as the Archbishops of Lyons, Paris, Rheims, and others not necessary to particularize. And are, then, the bishops chosen by yourselves, factious men, political enemies. You shall see.

Let us see how another of these factious ecclesiastics expresses himself. It is the Bishop of Marseilles, another yet of those who have raised their voices most energetically against the University. He thus addresses the king :—Let his Majesty condescend to believe the bishops, in preference to those who assert that should the education of youth fall into the hands of the clergy, it would be hostile to his throne. In the work of instruction, the clergy will always follow the direction of the chief pastors, who will not instil sentiments unworthy of the spirit of peace by which they are animated. In the exercise of the liberty of instruction, the clergy will never be the instrument of a party. Happy in a state of things which allows it to contribute to the good of souls, the only object of its holy ambition, it will adhere to its mission with a scrupulous care not to compromise it, and with a constant feeling of gratitude towards the prince who shall have afforded it the means of fulfilling it. It would not cease to call down blessings upon the reign of that prince, and to send up prayers that length of days may be granted him. Little do they know the heart of a priest, who deem that there are interests dearer to him than those of the glory of God and the salvation of souls. The guide of his conduct will be the means afforded him of fulfilling the dictates of his zeal. His thoughts soar above mere human affections."

Be it as it may, this fact alone would prove that the clergy spring from the very bosom of the French people, and that never was there a clergy more national, and, in the good sense of the term, more democratic. An immense majority of the French clergy spring from the rural population ; as heretofore the soldiers of the Republic quitted the plough of their fathers to hurry to the frontier and vanquish all Europe banded against them, so may the French clergy be said to have quitted the plough, in order to fly to the conquest of souls for heaven.



Now, it is against a clergy so composed, despoiled of all that constituted its grandeur and power, that men venture to evoke the acts of the ancient regime, the edicts of Louis XIV. and Louis XV., as though such authorities were available under a free government. I have but one word to say on this head, but I think it a conclusive one. You invoke against us the authority of the ancient regime; well then, re-establish in our regard that ancient regime; restore us the oath which royalty took at its consecration, to maintain the Catholic religion and to exterminate heresy. (*A laugh.*)

You invoke against us the ancient regime; well then, re-establish whatever was favourable to us in the ancient regime. At that time the order of the clergy composed a Chamber of itself, the first of the States General; we had eighty millions of funded property; monastic orders, abbeys, and convents covered the soil of France; churchmen were then Counsellors of State and Counsellors in Parliament. (*Merriment.*)

*The Chancellor.*—Sirs, I invite you to silence, the question is sufficiently grave to command quiet attention.

*The Count Montalembert.*—When I said, restore us all this, it was of course understood, sirs, that at this time of day, I meant to make no such demand. Those who think as I do, ask but one thing—liberty as it exists of right in France, of fact in England, and of right and fact in Belgium. If, after having stripped us of all that was once ours, you also deprive us of our liberty; if, after you have confiscated all the advantages and all the splendour of the ancient order, you present us with our ancient shackles, I have a right to say, that it is the height of oppression, injustice, and hypocrisy.

[The Count then entered into a disquisition upon the liberties of the Gallican Church. After proving that they had never existed in an authentic form, had never received the force of law, and were justly characterized by the clergy of 1630, as “elements of slavery rather than of liberty,” he thus proceeded:]

At length the war was opened by an attack upon a respectable priest, whose life had been consecrated to apostolic labours, and this for having said in regard to the University, what others besides himself believed to be the truth; while at the college of France, professors, who in a series of repeated lectures, had poured outrage and abuse upon things which we hold as most sacred, received not the least reprimand, not the slightest censure.

Not wishing to deprive the head of the University of his privilege of bringing to justice the authors of these outrages, I shall not stop to cite any of the censurable passages in the lectures in question; but this I will say, that when a great scandal has been given in a course of instruction, delivered under the very sanction of the State; that when no steps have been taken to redress the evil, not a breath of censure, not even a passing notice; there is a total absence of generosity and of loyalty, in pursuing, for another cause, the first priest they could lay hands upon.

Well, it is the same minister, the immediate head of these professors, who has remained silent in the midst of the publicity, not to say popularity of these lectures; it is the same minister who thought himself called upon in duty to denounce a priest to the Attorney General.

*The Minister of Public Instruction.*—It was his right and his duty so to do.

*The Count Montalembert.*—You have no right to interrupt me.

*The Minister.*—I have a right to reply to you.

*The Count.*—Yes, when I have spoken; but at this moment, you have but a single right, the right to listen to me.



Again, a journal is attacked ; it is hoped to ruin it by dint of actions and condemnations. And for what ? For having published an expression of sympathy towards a condemned priest : and yet nothing was done against another journal, of extensive circulation, in which the most shameless accusations were made against the mode of instruction in the seminaries of France, which were taxed with polluting the imagination and heart of young men educating for the church.

Why this distinction ? Because one of these journals is thought to be weak, the other strong. Once again, let it not be supposed that I am asking for prosecution and lawsuits, any more than I was just now asking for a revival of the ancient regime. All I ask, is free liberty of discussion.

But when I see the yoke pressing upon one side, I raise my head to see if it does not also press upon the other ; and when I find that it does not, I say it aloud, that the weak are attacked, and the strong passed by ; and I add, that such an attack is a proof neither of courage nor of generosity. Of all the legacies of despotism, this, if not the most cruel, is the most absurd and revolting ; that in a country where the irremovability of the judges, and the publicity of the tribunals is a common right ; where the free defence of the accused is a common right ; where the poorest vagrant enjoys his guarantees, we have here the highest ministers of conscience and morality, for some of the most delicate and important acts of their ministry, dragged before a so called removeable tribunal, without publicity, without defence, without any guarantee whatever.

It is the same with regard to these citations into court, as with other abuses aimed at the episcopacy. I here fulfil a sacred duty, by protesting once for all against the declaration, that a priest thus treated should have the same feeling as a soldier reprimanded by the military order of the day ; the absurdity has been carried so far, as to compare a bishop thus attacked, with a lawyer receiving an admonition from a disciplinary court ! It is true that it is an aged lawyer who has made this comparison, and professional bias may serve as some excuse for his blindness. (*A laugh.*) But it is forgotten, that in order to exercise this moral repression, two things are necessary to the power that arrogates it,—moral authority and competency. But in ecclesiastical matters, the council of state is equally defective in both these requisites.

How can a catholic pontiff recognise, in matters of conscience, discipline, and the administration of the sacraments, the authority of a council that may be composed of men without any religion ? Can any thing be conceived more absurd than the competency of such catholic laies as would be strangely embarrassed if they were invited to recite the commandments of God, and of the church, or if there were question of the refusal of sacraments to which they are strangers ? In the last declaration of abuse, it has been declared that the Bishop of Chalons had been a *troubler of consciences* ; now, one of two things, either the consciences in question are catholic, or they are not. If they are not, they cannot be troubled by a bishop, and have no need of soothing ; if they are, it is not in you that the right will be recognised of so soothing them. I would ask any man of good sense, whether there is a more ridiculous idea than that of a conscience so delicate as to be troubled by the words of a bishop, and yet so easy as to be quieted by a report of the Vicomte D'Haubersaert, or an ordinance of M. Martin (du Nord.) (*A laugh.*) Yes, I defy them to find me a single man in France, who would say ; “Yesterday I felt troubled, my bishop had said things that dis-



composed me, but to-day Messrs. D'Haubersaert and Martin have spoken, and I am tranquil again. (*More laughter.*)

If, in respect to the thing judged, the word be obedience, submission; we obey, we pay the fine, go into prison, and grumble at our judges during the twenty-four hours that are granted for the same. But if there be question of approval, even tacit, of the sentence passed; no never, so long as the thing judged is repugnant to duty and to a christian conscience. I do not say that the whole of our religion is based upon a contempt for a host of things judged; I do not say that the Divine Founder of our faith was himself condemned by a tribunal; I do not say that the martyrs, whose relics are upon our altars, whose memory we venerate in our daily prayers, and whose names we bear, were also the victims of Roman justice—not to speak of the numerous martyrs of our own day, those admirable missionaries who make their way into the Corea, and to Cochin China, to preach the christian faith, in defiance of the laws of the country, and to perish for the same.

But to descend from such lofty ground to facts of an inferior order; have you not yourselves, sirs, recommended in the programme of your University the “*Provincials*” of Pascal, which were burnt by the hands of the public executioner, by a decree of Parliament? Is this respecting the thing judged?

But what applies better to our living laws and manners, is an example furnished us by a country, from which we have borrowed the institution of the trial by jury. Look at O'Connell, condemned for conspiracy against the greatness and prosperity of England. Well, what was the case? When this conspirator entered the House of Commons for the first time after his condemnation, the half of the assembly rose to salute him with acclamations of applause. And afterwards, at a public banquet, peers of England of the highest birth, thirty members of the House of Commons, and more than three thousand citizens, took their seats beside him, to express their sense of his position. Such are the manners of a nation of genuine freemen, from whom you have borrowed the trial by jury. Such are the conditions of the wisdom of a constitutional government. Learn there, once for all, to make such conditions your own. It is strangely to misunderstand them, to attempt to repress the interior struggles of man's conscience, to chain the fetterless spirit.

To suppose that the Abbe Cambalot, whose name has so often resounded in the other Chamber, is dishonoured in my eyes by the forced sentence that has been passed against him, what a strange illusion! The man whom we see invested with the faculty of consecrating at the altar the body of the Lord, of preaching the divine word, that he should be torn from his august functions, to expiate in a dungeon the wrong of having spoken the truth, can excite no other feelings than those of sympathy and affection, and we express them to him, because we are taught to believe that we live in a free country.

In vain do you attempt to confound the penalty with which a crime against political order, or the opinion of power is visited, with the crimes against moral order, which are universally recognised. So strongly is the impotency of these remedies felt, that we are urged to pass new laws, *implacable* laws, to repress the audacity of the age. By all means pass them; we have nothing to fear from them. You can do nothing new in our regard. We have passed through all the tyrannies of the world, and we have survived them all.

And, after all, we are no upstarts, no men of yesterday; we are



an old race, whose history is familiarly known. There it stands, so written that all may read, to encourage our own children and to enlighten our persecutors. No assembly in France will ever have the popularity of the Constituante, the omnipotence of the Convention, or the illusion of glory that hung round the emperor. Now there are men living among us who have seen the Constituants, the Terrorists, and Napoleon pass away. They attempted schism in 1791, the scaffold in 1793, banishment in 1798, and state prisons in 1811, and nothing of all this has prevailed against us. Pass laws, then, if it seem good; they may be executed, perhaps, but rest assured they will be powerless. Man's conscience stands out of the reach of legists; and you are not men of mettle enough to succeed in a struggle, in which so little advantage accrued either to a Mirabeau, a Robespierre, or a Napoleon.

I have named Napoleon: to him are to be traced the greater part of the laws, incompatible with the social order of the Charter, which are applied to us, and the despotic measures which are invoked against us. Napoleon possessed a power which you will never have, and he used it largely against the church. He held the supreme pontiff himself five years in prison; he dragged him from Rome to Fontainebleau in a carriage which was kept locked like one of your prison conveyances [*a black Maria*]; he kept his first minister, Cardinal Pacca, in the dungeons of Fenestrelles, and when the imprisoned prelate asked for a breviary, they gave him a volume of Voltaire. (*Great emotion.*)

*The Count Excelmans.*—Impossible! Napoleon would never have acted so.

*The Count Montalembert.*—If not Napoleon, it was his agents. Cardinal Pacca states the fact. At all events, it will not be denied that Napoleon filled the prison of Vincennes with bishops: and to prove that he spared no order of the ecclesiastical hierarchy who had the boldness to resist him, on the 6th of April 1813 he ordered off all the seminarists of Ghent as refractory conscripts, and incorporated them in mass into I know not what company of artillery at Wesel. (*Fresh emotion.*)

*Several Peers.*—No! no!

*Other Peers.*—Yes, it is a fact!

*The Count Montalembert.*—Well, sirs, and in what did all this eventuate? Good heavens! it is an old story, that has been repeated a hundred times; the emperor went to die at St. Helena, and Pius VII. died in Rome, bestowing the rites of hospitality on the family of his persecutor. Cardinal Pacca still edifies the church by his generous virtues, and lately he has given to the world a striking picture of the struggles of the church, congratulating himself on never having yielded to the pusillanimous counsels of human prudence; and as to the poor seminarists of Ghent, such of them as did not perish amidst the snows of Russia, returned to resume their former station, and to inspire with new energy the clergy of Belgium.

I have named Belgium; and there too what a lesson and what an example! There, a king, surrounded at once by the courtesies of diplomacy and liberalism, felt himself obliged to follow the system recommended to you. He invented liberties for the Belgic Church, of which no mortal had ever heard before: he organized a Council of State, appeals in the way of abuses, &c.; and he was resisted by the Episcopacy on this very question of public instruction; he thought well to drag a bishop, the Prince de Broglie, Bishop of Ghent, cousin to the noble duke who is listening to me, to drag him before the Court of Assises, to have him condemned *par con-*



*tumace*, and to have him pilloried in effigy between two thieves; all this passed at your very doors, some twenty years ago. And in what did all this eventuate? Why you all know that it led to the raising of the son-in-law of the King of the French to the throne of Belgium. (*Varied emotion.*)

You are well aware, sirs, that a weapon can be employed against us, which neither Napoleon, nor William of Nassau, ever allowed to be raised against the church,—that of popular violence. We live under a regime which allowed the outbreak of St. Germain l'Auxerrois, the pillage of the archiepiscopal palace, and which came here to propose a law which I shall always congratulate myself no having resisted—that of consecrating the work of popular fury, by transforming into a promenade the ground on which the archiepiscopal palace of Paris stood. Even now, by dint of denunciations, calumnies, and direct provocations, a frantic mob may be let loose against that church and that residence; but on the morrow of such a day, which of the two will be the most hurt, the most sunk in the estimation of France and of Europe, the Government or the Church? My question is answered by the experience of the past. It is not the church that has suffered most from the violence of which she has been the victim.

Of this, sirs, be well assured, that Catholicism fears neither the violence of popular outbreak, nor the violence of the law. In the struggle which begins, but which, believe me, will not end by a veto upon such or such a project of law, the matter at issue is not a question of party, but a question of conscience. Consciences are not to be disposed of like parties. You are told to be implacable and inflexible; but know you what is the most inflexible thing in the world? I will tell you; it is neither the rigour of unjust laws, the courage of politicians, nor the virtue of legists—it is the conscience of a Christian staunch to his faith.

Allow me to tell you, sirs, that there has risen up among you a generation of men whom you know not. Nickname them neo-catholics, sacristans, ultra-montanists, what you will; the name is nothing, the thing exists. This generation is willing to take for its motto the words of the manifest put forth in the last century by the generous Poles who resisted Catharine II:—"We who prize liberty more than all the world, and the Catholic religion still more than liberty."

We are neither conspirators, nor courtiers; we are to be found neither in mobs, nor in antichambers; we are strangers to coalitions, to recriminations of every kind, to the struggles of cabinets or parties; we have been neither at Ghent, nor at Belgrave-Square; if we have been on a pilgrimage, it has been to the tomb of the Apostles, of Pontiffs and of Martyrs; while maintaining christian respect and esteem for the powers that be, we have learned how to resist them when they overstep the boundaries of right, and how to survive them when they fall. Born and cradled in the bosom of the liberty of representative and constitutional institutions, our heart and our soul is there, now and forever.

But it is said to us; Liberty is not for you, she is against you, she is no work of yours. True it is that liberty may not be our work, but she is our property: and who shall dare to wrest it from our hands? To those who hold such language to us we reply; and France, is she the work of your hands? and yet you are proud to be the children of her soil. Well, then, liberty is our sun; it is not given to mortal man to quench its glorious light. The Charter is the ground upon which we tread, and from which we rise stronger when as-



saulted ; and no one can take this ground from beneath our feet. We bless the institutions under which it is given us to live ; we practise, we apply them ; and such shall be our reply to the unworthy and calumnious accusation which the Minister of Public Instruction brought against us, when on two occasions he asserted in the other Chamber, that under the mask of the religious spirit, was concealed the spirit of political party.

This calumny bears directly upon all those who took part in a recent polemical discussion ; but of all those men I am the only individual who is able to raise his voice within the precincts of parliament. I therefore make use of this nobler privilege to defend both them and myself. Let it be said, let it be freely avowed ; it was sought to make it believed, that the legitimists were the party who stirred up against the government the question of public instruction and religious liberty.

Be it known, then, that the immense majority of those who, by their writings, have taken a part in this question, are any thing but legitimists : they are men who, as well among the clergy as the laity, have given undoubted proofs of the great difference that exists between their opinion and the legitimist opinion. Among all the publications upon this subject, from the letters of the Archbishop of Lyons down to those of the most petty sacristan, there is not a single one but comprises a formal recognition of the actual dynasty and constitution of France.

Assuredly, this we know, that our rights as christians and as fathers are anterior to all the dynasties, and all the constitutions in the world ; but, at the same time, it is a happiness to see that these rights have been consecrated by the constitution of our country.

For ten years the legitimist journals have not touched this question, and up to the present the greater part of the legitimist orators have not spoken of it. I say this not to accuse them, but to state a fact. After this, it is clear that when they saw the advantage that could be taken of it, through your fault, it was not forbidden them to take a part in the same. Do you know who, in this, have been the true promoters of the legitimist cause ? It is the government ; it is the minister. The legitimists are fathers of families : you cannot prevent their being fathers, and being such, to interest themselves in the salvation of the souls of their children. It is you who have furnished them with the powerful weapon of the rights of conscience, and of paternity misunderstood.

If any one has effectively promoted the legitimist cause, the minister of public instruction has done so by identifying the legitimist question with religious questions ; questions which men more wisely devoted to the dynasty and the country, had been careful to keep distinct.

Allow me to tell you, sirs, that you are about to reproduce, in another shape, the faults of the Restoration, faults which have been productive of so much mischief. You are estranging from you, you are driving into hostility, men who, without being of the same origin as you, ask nothing better, so far as the public interests are concerned, than to lend you the aid of their adhesion and of their political morality. The heads of the clergy, and a host of zealous and sincere Catholics, are, in regard to the present government, saving such differences as each one understands, in a position analagous to that occupied under the Restoration by the eminent men whom I see before me, the Count Molè, the Duke de Broglie, and M. Guizot himself. The Restoration rejected them ; they did not overturn it : but who can tell how far the absence of their co-operation may have



been conducive to its ruin? It was in this sense that the bishops of the province of Paris said so justly to the king, that "M. Villemain had, in three years, been the means of losing all the ground that had been gained during ten years of struggle, prudence, and ability."

As for myself, I pardon him with all my heart, for I am persuaded that he has rendered the Catholics an incalculable service. We were slumbering in a fatal security, he aroused us from the torpor in which we lay; and now, by the blessing of God, we shall slumber no more.

*The Minister of Public Instruction.*—I ask leave to speak, gentlemen.

*The Count de Montalembert.*—You can reply to me in your turn.

*The Minister.*—There are some things too personal not to make it desirable to reply.

*The Count de Montalembert.*—One word more, and I have done, M. the Minister may then reply to me at his leisure.

I have spoken of internal matters; a word more, and I shall have done as to what is passing in foreign countries.

When a recourse to new laws is proposed, and that with reference to an institution so universal as Catholicism, it is right—nay, it is necessary—to look around us.

Fix your eyes for one instant upon what has been passing in the world during the last fifteen years, and say on which side are the persecutors and where the oppressors?

In Sweden, is it Catholicism that condemns a citizen as guilty of having desired to return to the faith that his country professed for seven centuries? Is it Catholicism that condemns him to banishment and the confiscation of his property?

In Switzerland, is it Catholicism that violates the federal compact, in order to destroy the abbeys, and says, in language worthy of the College of France, *that it is necessary to harness the monks to the cannon?*

In Russia, is it Catholicism that has butchered a nation, and that tears from them by little and little, with what remains of life, the faith of their fathers? No: it is a schismatic power that has exercised before you, and better than you, the monopoly of teaching by the State. It is Russia that cut the throat of Catholic Poland.

In Prussia, is it Catholicism which does violence to conscience; which imprisoned an aged man, and set the banks of the Rhine in a blaze? No: it was a Protestant king, in the land of rationalism, that carried off a Catholic prelate guilty of unwillingness to grant the blessing of the church to unions that conscience reproves.

In England—that oppressed nation that longs to burst its chains—are they Catholics who are enchained, robbed, insulted? No: it is a Parliamentary Church, a State religion, a Church in the State; this it is that has trampled under foot the Catholics of Ireland, and has prepared for the English nation the most fearful dangers. On all sides the Catholics are the oppressed; on no side are they the oppressors.

And the only country in which—since the revolution of 1789—the Catholics have had, not the highest, but the preponderating voice, safe from the Gallican and the Jansenist spirit—Belgium, is also the only country in which liberty for all, and in all, has been proclaimed, loyally applied, and nobly guaranteed.

But, in return, if on all sides Catholicism is persecuted, nowhere is she persecuted with impunity. See how, in Prussia, the heroic resistance of the Archbishop of Cologne shook the Prussian power



to its foundations. The last king of that country has not carried off the victory, notwithstanding the astuteness of his diplomatists, and the zeal of his administrators, and his generals of cavalry; he was conquered, I dare to say it, by the resistance of the imprisoned old man who saved the rights of conscience and the sanctity of marriage.

In Russia, what opposes an insuperable barrier to the Imperial power? What prevents its marching securely to the accomplishment of its ambitious designs? Is it not Catholicism, that nothing can ever uproot from the martyred heart of generous Poland? Is it not the Pope who alone among the sovereigns of the world has the courage to protest against the abuses of this power, and the iniquity of this despotism?

And in Spain, behold that man, whom the Marquis of Boissy last year described as an executioner, but whom I content myself with calling the persecutor of the church. His also was one of those governments that are *un-confessed*. He had exiled and imprisoned the bishops, and spoiled the church of the last wrecks of its splendour. He had done more, and I recommend this trait to the canonists of the Council of State and the Court of Cassation, he had conceived the plan of interdicting the exercise of the sacerdotal function to every priest who could not present a certificate verifying the correctness of his political opinions. Well, I saw this man in the last days of his splendour. He was believed to be all powerful; he had expelled his benefactress, had caused his rivals to be shot, was sustained by England, and was playing with France. Such was the state in which I saw him; he was thought more powerful than ever. All at once a slight cloud was seen to form itself in the horizon, that cloud soon transformed itself into a formidable hurricane.

This man, who had overcome at once both courage and good sense, let fall his sword, and the intelligence which had happily guided him up to that point abandoned him: and I do not think that I am insulting misfortune when I say, that he fell without honour and without glory. Meanwhile, what had the church been doing? In the midst of the derision of philosophy and liberalism, the aged pontiff who reigns at Rome, who directs our consciences, and troubles them when need is, ordained a jubilee—that is to say, that, from all parts, the weapon which never will be mastered, but which had rusted in our hands,—the sword of prayer, is pointed towards heaven, and from the Ganges to the Danube all Catholics prayed; the devout old woman of Paris, and the devout old woman of New York, said to God, in the language of David; “Arise, and judge thy cause.” The cause has been judged; the persecutor of the church has fallen; and this day the bishops, whom he had expelled, whom he had banished, whom he had spoiled, are returning one by one in triumph, and amid public acclamations resume the seats from which he had precipitated them.

Nor imagine, sirs, that I present this to you as a miracle; it is but the natural consequence of our faith, the most ordinary lesson of our history.

And whither has this dethroned Duke of Victory turned his steps? To England. And what has he found there? Ah, it is here that the justice of God is manifest. Yes, the free, the powerful, the invincible England sees her greatness menaced, her power compromised, her incredible prosperity neutralized, in consequence of her attempts against the Catholic Church and people. In the very bosom of Anglicanism, of the despoiling aristocracy, a powerful



party is found, and increases every day; a party that is called there as here, an ecclesiastical party, which claims for its phantom of a church the liberty, the authority, and the property, of which the Catholics were despoiled.

What do I say? Hear it, gentlemen; they even demand the re-establishment of the monastic orders, as the only remedy for this daily increasing misery of a people, who have been robbed of Catholic faith and charity.

While the organ of the pretended Conservatives in France threatens Cardinal Bonald with the suppression of the salaries granted to the clergy, the *Times*, the organ of the English Conservatives, exhorts the English Government to endow liberally the Catholic clergy of Ireland; in the same view both the one and the other, because they hope to enslave the Church, the one by spoiling, the other by enriching it. And yet Ireland, the avenger of Catholicism, stands up beside England to demand an account of three centuries of oppression exercised against Catholics. Every day the danger increases; no one can predict how it will end. But what is already palpable is, that there are certain spoiliations, for which there is no prescription: certain iniquities for which there is no pardon—the spoiliations and iniquities inflicted on the Church.

In vain does the wave of ages, of the oblivion of all human prosperities, appear to have covered the rock; the moment of reflux comes sooner or later, and the rock appears again unshaken and unhurt by the flood.

Do you believe, sirs, that this grand spectacle of the justice of the Lord can be without influence upon us? We who, during eighteen centuries, form the mightiest fraternity of the universe? Do you believe that we are become insensible to the lessons which our brethren of foreign lands give us? And when you yourselves are throwing down the barriers that separate us from them; when railroads and steam annihilate distances; when what was said yesterday in Dublin, or at Brussels, is printed to-day in Paris, and goes to-morrow to carry courage and hope into the remotest presbytery of France; do you think that we shall remain deaf and blind, and that the Catholic fibre will not vibrate with a growing energy in our hearts?

In this France, accustomed to give birth to none but men of heart and spirit, shall we alone—we Catholics, consent to be weak and dastardly? Do we confess ourselves to be so bastardised, degenerated from our fathers, that we must abdicate our reason, and consign it into the hands of rationalism? deliver up our consciences to the University, our dignity and our liberty into the hands of those legists whose hatred of the liberty of the church is equalled only by their profound ignorance of its rights and its dogmas? What! because we are of the number of those *who are confessed*, is it to be thought that we shall rise from the feet of our priests fully disposed to hold out our hands to the hands of an anti-constitutional legality? What! because the sentiment of faith reigns in our hearts, is it to be thought that honour and courage have perished there? Ah! be undeceived. Men say to you, “Be implacable.” Very well! Be it so; do all that you will, and all that you can, the church answers you, by the lips of Tertullian and of the gentle Fenelon; *We are not to be feared by you, but we do not fear you*: and I will add, in the name of Catholic laymen, like myself, the Catholics of the 19th century, that among a free people, we will not be helots; we are the successors of the martyrs, and we do not tremble before the successors of Julian the Apostate. We are the sons of the Crusaders, and we will not retreat before the offspring of Voltaire.







